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## EDITORIAL.

EDITORS, E. D. COPE AND J. S. KINGSLEY.

IN these pages nearly four years ago (*AMERICAN NATURALIST*, XXI., p. 549) we made an appeal for some properly qualified person to write a "Complete Unnatural History." The necessary conditions of mind were stated at some length. There must be an instinctive ability to unerringly discriminate between the false and the true, and to invariably appropriate the former; a capacity to trace results from no adequate cause; and a firm conviction that all the so-called leaders of science were totally wrong, while the author is infallible.

Although we have not returned to the subject in the interval, the editors of the *NATURALIST* have been constantly on the lookout for the proper person. Numerous claims have been investigated, for many pretenders have arisen. It is useless to enumerate them all, for until this present year of grace, 1891, not a single candidate has been proposed who had the necessary grasp of subject, the proper disregard of cause and effect, and the all-important wealth of imagination. The Ohio minister who preached those celebrated sermons on the Creation in which petroleum was regarded as "strong-smelling grease," fried out from the decomposing bodies of antediluvian reptiles; the man who claimed that the Great Lakes are drained by an underground channel into the Mississippi River; the Buffalo doctor who maintained that bacteria are decomposing fibrin; the crowd of "pyramidologists,"—all were soon dismissed in short order. We debated longer in the case of a callow youth whom we found studying the relations existing between the abundance of birds and meteorological conditions,—not because of any capacity shown in choice of a subject, but from the methods of thought revealed by a glance at his notebook. A sample will suffice: "June 23d, 9 A. M. Saw two gulls. Sky clear. Wind S. W. June 23d, 9.23. Three loons on water, distant half mile. Sky clear. Wind S. S. W. June 23d, 9.37. Wilson's tern flying overhead towards west. Sky clear. Wind a little

stronger." And so on page after page. Imagination is here clearly lacking, and the promising youth was therefore turned over to the tender mercies of Dr. Chadbourne's Society for the Suppression of Useless Knowledge.

Now we believe that we have obtained the long-sought author. The essay which forms the basis of this opinion was published in January, 1890, in Vol. III. of *The Literary Light*, published by C. D. Raymer, 243 Fourth Avenue, S., Minneapolis, Minn. The essay is entitled "The Origin of Life and Species, And Theory by Which all Phases of Life, and Phenomena in Connection with Such, can be Readily Explained." Would we had the space to reproduce the whole essay! Excerpts must for the present answer, for doubtless this brochure will be embodied in the long-looked-for Unnatural History.

"An organism is a creature of environment, and has, like all things, obtained its life and all that belongs to it, and sequently all the possibilities of its future, during its incipency by heredity. Whatever evolved properties and principles an environment may contain, generation rarely leaves any out. The future growth determines where and what from they were produced. Sequently they are species."

"A reproduction, like all things, is composed of ponderables and imponderables. It is an organism with life attached, or composed of an aggregation of lives. . . . I have yet to learn that ponderables alone exhibit any activity whatever. They are invariably produced by, through, and are an organism."

"Generation is not a substance. It is a word to express the workings of the activities of a thing, a substance or a combination of substances by which phenomena are exhibited or produced. . . . It being the agent in all reproduction, performing the functions of the activities of a combination or an environment of material, containing definite substances, in first producing organized nuclei out of that material through the positive energies, usually in vast numbers. . . . They are called in the animal kingdom when fully developed, 'episoids' or 'zooids'; in the vegetable, 'pollen grains' or pollen."

"When we are first able to perceive nuclei with the most perfect lens yet constructed, we find them to be mere specks. By close observation we are able to perceive that the albuminoid substance is consumed, and that the nuclei grow, and in a short time are developed living organisms, just ready to emerge from the first stage of their existence."

"Bacilli by generation are a product of the properties of the products of the earth, where they first originate. Properties of the earth's products are a substance that we can usually taste."

"Intelligence is an imponderable substance, grown and produced by the animal kingdom, and as it and bacteria are products of products of the earth, they may be called kingdoms of growth. Human intelligence is a product produced by the animal man, the seat of which is located by phrenologists in his brain, in no less than thirty-five sections, and like all organisms in nature, may be classed into genera, species, and varieties."

"Should any error of fact or otherwise occur in my explanations, or should any phenomena in nature appear that no place can be found in my hypothesis, or a desire for further explanation on the subject, I would like to be informed of the fact, and what it is. If a fallacy, wherein does it lay.—GEORGE DAVIS; address, 2613 First Ave. S., Minneapolis, Minn."

We can assure a long-waiting world that if Mr. Davis attempts the Unnatural History the result will be a complete success.

—THE commission selected to examine and report on suitable locations for national reservations of land for the purpose of creating public parks has done a good work. They have selected about one hundred tracts from all parts of the country, which will be recommended to Congress for adoption. To the Yellowstone, the Yosemite, and the Sequoia Parks will be added one or more from nearly every state and territory of the Union. This is a measure which the scientific sentiment of the country will universally sustain. The preservation of tracts of forest, if only of limited extent, is highly important; and the preservation of game commends itself to everybody. Reasonable hunters are rare, and a good many men consider themselves sportsmen who

do not deserve the name. Without game reservations like the national parks, the large game of this continent will soon become extinct.

What we need further is an efficient forestry organization which shall prevent or suppress the forest fires which annually desolate our country. As our state organizations have shown themselves incompetent to deal with the question, the national government should take hold of it. It is to be hoped that the Forestry Commission of the Agricultural Department will be empowered to do so. Not only should the forest fires be suppressed, but their authors should be punished, whether the former are, as in some instances, at least, of incendiary origin or not. Railroad companies should be compelled to place spark catchers or extinguishers on their engines, under heavy penalties for non-compliance. Some action must be taken in the matter immediately, especially as we are now receiving the scum of Europe, whose carelessness of all matters of public economy is well known. We cannot afford to have our mountain regions converted into bare rocks, as most of the regions inhabited by the earlier civilizations of Europe now are. First the forests disappear, and then the soil from the mountain sides. Fire is a great friend of man, but in the hands of an unwatched European peasantry it is an evil great enough to render the punishment inflicted on Prometheus a wholesome warning to all who misuse this one of the greatest of nature's benefits.